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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 000400

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#) [SR](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIA CONTINUES TO BACK AHTISAARI, URGES
REALISM ON SERBS AND PATIENCE ON KOSOVARS

REF: A. STATE 37835
[1](#)B. FREDEN-EUR/NCE E-MAIL 3/14/07

Classified By: DCM Alex Karagiannis, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. FM Kalfin told the Ambassador March 26 that "independence is the only option" for Kosovo and undertook to work toward an EU consensus in support of Ahtisaari's proposals. In meetings with Serb and Kosovar leaders the week of March 19, PM Stanishev preached realism and patience, respectively. Bulgaria believes Serb leaders are close to forming a government with Kostunica as PM and Tadic selecting the defense, foreign affairs and economy ministers, but that such a government would not last long because "Kostunica is moving toward the Radicals." Stanishev's foreign policy advisor called UNMIK "the weak link" in Kosovo and said Kosovars were becoming more radical. Serbs in Mitrovica "will do whatever Belgrade tells them to do." Bulgaria strongly supports a UNSCR on Kosovo because it does not want to be faced with the decision to recognize Kosovo if it declares independence unilaterally. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador discussed ref A points with Foreign Minister Kalfin March 26, reviewing the reasons that now is the time to make strong public statements backing supervised independence for Kosovo. He noted that we admired the positive role Bulgaria has played to date -- the March 14 MFA statement (ref B) was strong, and Stanishev's visit to Belgrade and Pristina last week had reinforced the message. Kalfin reiterated Bulgaria's strong support for supervised independence as the only option, but said he thought a statement reflecting EU consensus would have the greatest effect. He said he was sure this could be achieved by Friday's Gymnich meeting.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador responded that waiting until Friday would take too long: both the US and Ahtisaari had publicly spoken in support of supervised independence today, and an EU statement only on Friday would lead to doubt about European resolve. He urged Kalfin to use Bulgaria's position within the EU to try to push for faster action, or failing that, to make a national statement. Kalfin agreed that a faster EU statement would be best, and said he would undertake some "fast consultations" to that end, including getting in touch with Solana's office.

[1](#)4. (C) DCM met March 23 with the PM's foreign policy advisor, Valentin Radomirski, to discuss PM Stanishev's visit to Belgrade and Pristina earlier that week to participate in a meeting of the Socialist International. Stanishev used the opportunity to urge Tadic and Kostunica to be realistic regarding Kosovo's final status, but did not hear anything new in response. Kostunica "is counting heavily on Russia,"

Radomirski said. Tadic knows Serbia must accept Ahtisaari's proposal, but "he has no support." In contrast to Kostunica, Tadic believes "Russia will give up in the end." Even in a worst-case scenario, "Serbia will not go to war," Tadic assured Stanishev.

15. (C) Stanishev urged the Serbs to form a government as soon as possible. Radomirski said there appeared to be agreement in principle that Kostunica would become Prime Minister, and that Tadic would choose the MFA, MOD and Economy ministers. The finance and interior ministries are still under discussion, with the latter hinging on agreement between Tadic and Kostunica regarding Mladic's apprehension. Radomirski opined that such a government would not last long, partly because "Kostunica is moving toward the Radicals."

16. (C) In Pristina, Stanishev met with UNMIK, Hashim Thaci and leaders of the Serb minority community. Ceku was apparently out of the country. Radomirski said Thaci "understands the need for a peaceful transition," but worried that Ceku was becoming more hard-line in an effort to compensate for political weakness. The result is radicalization on the ground. Serbs in northern Kosovo have adopted a hard-line position, but "will do whatever Belgrade tells them to do." Serbs in other parts of Kosovo seem much more willing to accept a UNSCR. "Both fear the Albanians (sic) because they are not complying with any of their obligations," Radomirski stated. The head of the Orthodox church in Kosovo struck a moderate tone with Stanishev, saying he approved of Ahtisaari's proposals for protection of cultural monuments.

17. (C) Stanishev urged Serbs and Kosovars alike to be patient

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and maintain calm. Radomirski claimed that UNMIK is adrift due to frequent turnover of personnel and a lack of strong leadership. He called UNMIK "a weak link" in Kosovo, and said in this context that if violence breaks out, quite a few European countries will have second thoughts about Ahtisaari's plan.

18. (C) Radomirski said Bulgaria does not want to be put in the position of having to decide on recognition of Kosovo if it unilaterally declares independence; they want to see a UNSCR both because they support Ahtisaari and (we presume) because it will make life a lot easier for them. Radomirski believes "Russia is trying to bargain," and urged continued dialogue with Moscow. Stanishev told the Serbs that in the run-up to a UNSCR, the focus will be on Serbia; with the approval of a resolution, attention will shift to Kosovo's implementation of its provisions. Tadic understands this, but Kostunica is holding out for a Russian veto. Radomirski said they cautioned the Serbs on this score as well.

BEYRLE